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ABSTRACT

A naturalistic study (last of a three-part project) investigated how the reading and writing of children was affected by previous textual experiences. Subjects, first-grade students in one of seven classes in a small independent Christian school, were observed for about 2 hours weekly during their language period. Data consisted of detailed field notes, unstructured and structured interviews with the teacher and her students, personal journals of the researcher and the teacher, and the collection of literacy artifacts. Results indicated that (1) the writing of young children is influenced by texts that have been read to them; (2) intertextual ties were often made consciously, but sometimes occur unconsciously; (3) there were no strong ability differences; and (4) intertextuality is a richly social phenomenon in that it is not simply a cognitive process involving the utilization of background knowledge to produce a new text. (Thirteen figures consisting of samples of students' writing are included; 25 references are attached.) (RS)

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TEXT MEETS TEXT, READER MEETS WRITER

Trevor H. Cairney

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INTRODUCTION

Tolkien claimed that there are no new stories; only a "cauldron of stories" into which we dip as we write, (Cooper, p. 7, 1988). And I would add - read. Tolkien is certainly not the first person to observe that reading occurs against a backdrop of one's prior literary experiences. Most readers if probed will confess that they frequently think of other books as they read. Similarly, writers, if they are honest, will admit that the germs of their writing can often be traced to previous literary experiences with texts written and read.

Margaret Mahy, expressed this point nicely when reflecting upon her childhood literary experiences (1987, p. 151):

> "I wrote because I was a reader, and wanted to relive certain reading experiences more intimately by bringing them back out of myself".

Mahy went on to suggest that other books "are the very infections" that she is hoping for as she reads:

> "Books give me access to a continuous and reciprocating discussion, and the awareness of lots of things all going on simultaneously, a concurrence that seems to me to be an important aspect of truth ... I think I dissolved the books I needed and no doubt I still carry them (in solution) within me (p. 157)."

The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of this cauldron of stories, to see if and how children draw upon the solutions of stories they carry around in their heads. I intend to report the findings of a two year study which sought to investigate the questions: How is the reading and writing of children aged 6-12 years affected by previous textual experiences?

My work was a natural outgrowth of a general trend in reading research that has emphasised an interest in reading-writing relationships (Shanklin, 1982; Tierney and Pearson, 1983; Cairney, 1985). Like other researchers (eg. Kamil, 1984; Rowe, 1984) I have become more aware of the active role of the reader. As well, I have been influenced by cultural semioticians like Peirce, Eco and Barthes who have all pointed out that texts have unlimited meanings. Barthes writes that the text is:

> "completely woven with quotations, references, and echoes. These are cultural languages ... that traverse the text from one end to the other in a vast stereophony .... Every text, being itself the intertext of another text (Barthes, 1979, p. 77)."

This process of interpreting one text by means of a previously composed text has been labelled "intertextuality" (Kristeva, 1980; DeBeaugrande, 1980).

> "No literary text is written in a vacuum. Besides the general culture surrounding the text and the author's own horizon (ie, his experiences, prejudices, use of language system, "worldview", and so on), there are, perhaps more importantly, other texts, especially literary texts (Orr, p.814)."

Kristeva (1980) sees intertextuality as a form of dialogue with the total texts of the reader's experiences. This dialogue can occur between texts produced through writing, reading, speaking, watching, listening etc. However, the study to be examined concerned itself only with the intertextual tying of texts written and read.

While a number of writers have talked about intertextuality, few have conducted research which has attempted to look closely at this phenomenon for the young reader/writer. Several studies have looked at how an experience with one text affects an experience with another conceptually related text (eg. Crafton, 1981; Hayes and Tierney, 1982), however, these studies have only examined a small slice of the potential connections from the experience offered by a literacy event.

The Hayes and Tierney (1982) study, for example, was concerned with the effect that developing background knowledge through analogy would play in the reading of subsequent related texts. However, the finding that students recall of texts was aided if they had previously read other texts with similar

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content is of significance for researchers interested in intertextuality. Studies like Hayes and Tierney's are indirectly examining intertextual ties between the specific content of the two texts. Their findings suggest that one text can serve as an experience that increases the comprehension of a second related text.

Similarly Crafton (1981) looked at how one text can support another. Students read two expository texts in one sitting. In one group, the two texts were conceptually related, while for the other they were unrelated. Crafton found that the reading of a related text served as an experience which made available background information for use in the reading of a related text. Students who read the conceptually related texts comprehended the second text far better than students who had read unrelated texts.

Within the study upon which this paper is based I set out to examine two questions:

1. Does the prior reading of related texts influence the content of written texts? Is it possible to identify links between texts in terms of genre, language, plot, characterisation, literary devices and so on?

2. Do instances of intertextuality vary quantitatively and qualitatively for children of different abilities?

The project was conducted in three stages. The first involved an empirical study of the reading of two texts by 80 grade 6 children. The second was an investigation of the same students' understanding and consciousness of intertextual tying evident within their own reading or writing. These first two stages of the project have been reported elsewhere (Cairney, 1988; Cairney, 1990). The purpose of this presentation is to share the findings of the third stage of this project which involved a detailed naturalistic investigation of the reading and writing of a group of grade 1 children.

The detailed investigation of intertextual tying within a normal classroom context was planned in response to the findings in stages 1 and 2. These findings indicated that intertextuality is:

(a) idiosyncratic and varies depending on a variety of factors including text characteristics, reading purpose, contextual influences etc;

(b) something of which most readers and writers are aware irrespective of age and ability;

(c) linked with many text features including genre, plot, characterisation and content;

(d) most commonly primed by specific elements of content and plot.

The third stage of this project was planned for three major reasons. First, it was felt that the initial empirical investigation provided a very limited analysis of intertextuality. Second, it was decided there was a need to observe students reading in natural settings in order to increase the ecological validity of the data being observed. Finally, the interviews within stage two of the study had yielded rich data concerning subjects' self reporting of their intertextual histories, and suggested that for young writers there were numerous links with texts that the teacher had read to them as a class. It was this specific type of intertextual tie that was to be investigated.

A DETAILED CASE STUDY OF A GRADE 1 CLASSROOM

I started visiting this class in June 1987. It was one of 7 classes in a small independent Christian school. While it is a fee paying school, socio-economically the parental population is similar to many neighbouring schools, with perhaps a slightly higher proportion of middle class families. However, like many independent schools it has more than its share of children who have failed in the State school system and who have been transferred by parents with the hope that things would be different in this school.

I had visited the school on a number of occasions over a three year period, each time to observe the students of one teacher who had been doing interesting things in language. The teacher, Inta, who became known to me because she was the wife of a colleague, had extensive experience (20 years teaching) and had long been recognised as an outstanding teacher. A teacher with an amazing warmth and love for her class, she had the respect of students, parents, and other staff. I approached Inta and asked if I could visit her classroom regularly to observe young readers and writers in a natural setting. She

responded positively and I began spending time in her room each Thursday from 9.30 am till 11.00 am (her language period).

(a) Method

As mentioned above, this stage of the project was essentially a case study. I was to act as a participant observer spending at least 2 hours per week in the classroom. I was to observe Inta's students while involved with them in a variety of language activities. In the initial weeks I simply wandered around the room observing and chatting to the children. However, as time went on, and I was accepted more fully, I assumed a more significant role. Students came to me frequently for advice while writing, I led story time segments, initiated literature response sessions and played an active part in all activities.

My major data collection tools were:

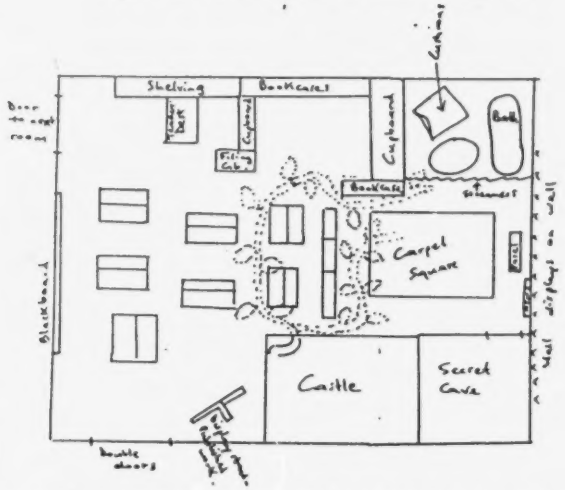
* detailed field notes using three major categories for recording observations: process, interactions and product;
* unstructured and structured interviews with Inta and her students;
* personal journals which both Inta and I kept;
* the collection of literacy artefacts

As specific instances of intertextuality were observed they were subjected to close scrutiny. Each event was discussed with Inta and the precise details of the nature and extent of the intertextual tie examined and recorded. Later, these separate events were analysed independently by myself and a second rater. Inductive analysis was then used to delineate recurring patterns and categorize each text which showed evidence of intertextuality.

(b) Initial Observations

When I first walked into Inta's classroom I was struck by the 'busyness' of it, both physically and in terms of pupil behaviour. It was also at times messy and noisy, but always there was an atmosphere of work and engagement in a variety of tasks. Figure 1 provides a floor plan for the room.

Figure 1: Floor plan of Inta's classroom



The following extract from my field notes (recorded during and at the end of my first visit) provides a record of my initial impressions:

> "My arrival in the classroom has hardly been noticed by the children. There is activity everywhere. Children are sitting at desks writing. Writing folders are lying open revealing masses of twisted trampled paper - drafts as yet unpublished. Several children are sitting discussing something, perhaps their stories. Inta has just realized that I've arrived. A bright 6 year old has caught her attention, and mentioned that I am here .... "

As I wandered around the room on the first day it was clear that these 5 and 6 year old children were remarkably self directed. Two girls were lying on the floor writing, two more were inside the magic cave, another three were in a 'castle' (both constructed by the class). Several boys were looking at encyclopaedias in search of information on snakes and lizards. Everywhere there was a gentle hum of noise, rising to a roar at times, only to be gently lulled by Inta.

The children seemed to work on in spite of me watching and peering. No-one asked what I was doing here. Everyone seemed prepared to let me observe them. In fact several seem thrilled to have my prying eyes looking at them while they worked. They would write a word, look up to smile, write another, and so on. The independence with which they worked is reflected in the following field note entry:

> "10.20 am - a visitor arrives from next door asking if the class will be coming for the regular television programme. Inta announces: "If you'd like to go next door for TV put your folders away and go on through. If you'd like to keep writing then just keep on going.' Several children drop everything and run, others finish the word or sentence they're on and make their way next door. About 10 students keep working on, while the rest leave over a period of 10 minutes".

On my first day in Inta's classroom I stayed for approximately 90 minutes, circulating around the room at will, talking to specific students, making notes, chatting, helping those who wanted assistance and so on. At the end of the session I talked briefly with Inta and left.

This was a pattern that was to be repeated each week, with the exception that by September, I began sharing literature with the class 10.30 - 11.00 am.

(c) Discussion of Intertextual Ties observed

At the outset, it is important to stress that there is no suggestion that the 'intertextual events' which are described below, represent all the links that these students made during the course of this study. First, I was directly observing students for only 2 hours per week. Second, the identification of these intertextual events was dependent upon Inta or I knowing the text that was influencing writing, or, alternatively, the children's spontaneous sharing of the details of ties of which they were aware. Third, as mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study was to examine the links between texts the teacher had read out aloud, and the children's writing. There are many other potential links between the texts children read and write. However, the description which follows provides a single lens view of the operation of this complex phenomenon in one classroom, from one perspective.

The richness of these data became apparent from my first day in Inta's classroom. During this visit I recorded the details of the following conversation while talking to Chlorissa who was stretched out writing on the carpet. As I knelt down I asked:

T.C: "What are you writing about?"

Chlorissa: "About these 3 children who go to live in the country and they go for a walk in the bush, which is really an enchanted wood, and they find a magic tree."

T.C: "Oh, what are the children's names?"

Chlorissa: "Jo, Bessy and Fanny."

T.C: "You know your story reminds me of one I read once."

Chlorissa: "Yeah, *The Enchanted Wood*, Mrs Gollasch read it to us. My story's a lot like that."

This first observation was on the 25th June, I was to have many conversations with Chlorissa about this piece, she was still writing her first draft in December. The story starts out very much like *The Enchanted Wood* but changes over time. However, it always remains a composite retelling of Blyton's Faraway Tree books. I will return to Chlorissa in my discussion later in the paper.

A short distance from Chlorissa (in the "secret cave") a boy named Brock was eagerly writing. I stopped to ask what he was writing:

T.C: "What are you writing?"

Brock: "It's a story about some children who move from the country to the city".

T.C: "How did you come up with this idea?"

Brock: "Well, it was like Chlorissa. That book (*Enchanted Wood*) had children who moved to the country. I changed it around."

Once again, this story is largely the same as the book. However, unlike Chlorissa, Brock persists for several writing sessions then puts the draft to one side.

On subsequent visits I was to witness many other examples of stories with direct links to books that the teacher had read, and occasionally that they had read themselves.

It seemed that every book Inta read led some children to put pen to paper. As I looked at their writing and examined drafts that were written before I started visiting, it became possible for me to piece together the books that had been read: *The Enchanted Wood, The Magic Faraway Tree, Folk of the Faraway Tree* and *The Wishing Chair* all written by Enid Blyton. Shortly after I arrived Inta read: *The BFG* and *Fantastic Mr Fox* by Roald Dahl.

All these books were finding their way into children's stories. Later in this paper, I describe all the links I observed between the students' writing and these books, what I refer to as: "Blyton look-a-likes". However, it is important to provide an overview of the diversity of the connections that children were making between their writing and their reading. In the time I spent in Inta's classroom I observed over 50 intertextual events. It is not possible to report all of these events. However, the following instances are representative of the diversity of intertextual ties observed. They are grouped under specific sub-headings which attempt to summarise the major feature of the intertextual tie.

1. Including fictional characters in real life recounts

One of the simplest types of intertextual ties involved writers inserting reference to a specific book which they had obviously enjoyed. This type of intertextual tie typically occurred within a recount. Reference to the text that had been read was generally minor. For example, Briohny was observed writing a piece (see Figure 2) about a trip to hospital for minor surgery over a period of almost 3 weeks (4/8/87 - 25/8/87).

Figure 2: Briohny's writing about a trip to hospital - spellings have been corrected

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I went to hospital on the weekend. When I got there I was very tired. I stayed in the children's ward at the hospital too. Everyone was nice.

When I first got there I was scared, then I thought its going to be fun.

The next day a man said wake up Briohny, time for your operation.

The piece continues for 5 pages in the same form then suddenly Briohny recounts a dream she had while in the hospital:

> My best part in hospital was when I had a dream about the BFG. He is amazing. My mum thinks that the BFG is the Big Fat Giant. Sometimes I laugh about him. Mum says that it's really funny. When I went back to school I found that I was the Girls' Captain ...

2. Story transformation using the original story as a springboard

Some of the writing that students produced used the plot of a story that had been heard as a springboard for their own composition. Usually the piece had some relationship to the original story, but the events were largely their own, and the elaboration of the plot was original.

One example was written by Lauren. As I watched her writing and read her piece over her shoulder it seemed obvious to me that there was a link between her writing and Roald Dahl's book *The BFG*. As I observed her I asked:

T.C: "What are you writing Lauren?"

Lauren: "The BHG"

T.C: "Why did you start writing this?"

Lauren: "You see Mrs Gollasch has this book called the BFG - *(with emphasis)* THE BIG FRIENDLY GIANT!! But I'm doing one about a big hungry giant".

Interestingly, Lauren called her piece *The Never Ending Story* (see Figure 3). The piece begins as Dahl's story does with a giant plucking Sophie out of her bedroom. However, rather than being a 'friendly giant' Lauren's giant wants to eat her, hence its rather different name. Once Sophie is taken away the story becomes completely original and ends with the BHG eating her.

Figure 3. Lauren's piece about the "Big Hungry Giant"

The Never Ending Story

By Lauren

5.8.87
Once the was a big giant calld the BHG. Evry night he went throuo the town and spooked evrybody. One night he took a little girl calld Soph out of her bed and took her back to his cave on a big hill. The BHG put her in a enms pot,

6.8.87
She tried to escap from the pot and she did "Whew" she said. The giant lookd in the pot and saw that she had gone "Wher has she gone" he rorod. Soph ran out of the cave and the giant just saw her go out the door so he ran his fastet out of the door and cased her. He cot her and put her in the pot agen. She scremd "AAAA". She got out agein and ran out the door and then ..... aneter gaint cot her and aet her.

The End

Another example of this type appeared almost 2 months later when Sarah wrote a piece about a family confronted by a giant. In this piece Sarah and Heather (a friend in the class) go to the bush and see a giant. He follows them home and appears at the windows and looks in. The giant says:

> "Don't be afraid, I will go back home and we can be friends."

In this story it is not until midway through the story that a direct link with the BFG becomes obvious. Once again, the story is largely the child's, but the plot has clearly acted as a springboard for writing.

3. Content links between texts read and written

This type of intertextual tie is probably the most difficult to identify because the links between the texts are fairly minor, and their identification is dependent upon other people's literary readings of the written text. Essentially, these ties reflect semantic association of content. At times writers are not even aware of a link themselves, and may even deny the existence of an intertextual tie. In fact, it would appear that intertextual instances of this type are frequently unintentional, the student's writing being inadvertently influenced by his/her intertextual history.

The story below (see Figure 4) and the dialogue with Ben is an example of this type of intertextuality. After finishing this piece Ben was given the opportunity to share it at an author sharing session. As soon as he finished reading his piece several children within the class spontaneously called out:"

Kids: "It's just like fantastic Mr Fox".

Inta asked Ben: "Were you thinking of the book when you wrote it Ben?

Ben: "No".

While it seems Ben did not want to give Dahl any credit for this story, content links were obvious to readers in the class. Inta had been reading *Fantastic Mr Fox* in the week Ben's piece had been written and hence the book was of current interest for them.

Figure 4: Ben's piece entitled *Fantastic Mr Fox*

22.10.87

Once a potime a ther wos a boy his nam wos Ben. He was a fama. Once day wen he was wocing. The chitens wer otsid and he saw a dead chiten. He ren to his Dad and tot him wat hpn. He sit, "we wil go hating to nit". So that nit vey wet hating. Vey saw a fox. Vey amd at the fox. Bng! Wet the gan. Vey mesd the fox. "Dam" said Ben's Dad. And Ben's Dad said "We wel go hating to nit." Soo vat nit vae wet hating. Ben saw the fox. He said "Looc, cec Dad looc, ves the fox." He shot at the fox - it got the fox's tal. Bens Dad sid "we got his tal". The fox was going "Aw, Aw, Aw, Aw". Ben's Dad ren up to the Foxoc tal. He said "Les gev it to yoo mother. The fox was sel going "Aw, Aw, Aw, Aw". Then Ben and hits Dad cepd insed. Then vey rapd the fox tal in raping papa. It was gold papa, it was rel gold papa. Wen it was Ben's mother booday vey gef her the foxo tal. She sid "Yipy" sid Bens mother. Vat nit vey wat to MacDols. Vey saw Bens fed, hes name was Adam, said "com har" and he cam ofa to Adam. He said "Do you wat to com to my paty tmoro?" Ben sld "Yes I wood love to come." So in the moning he had his brakfs. He had rasbabls. In haf an naw his Mum and Dad got up and had brakfs and Ben sid, "Ded you feget", sid Ben. "Yes we ded feget" said Bens Mum and Dad. "Cec Mum get Adams booday predt." "Alrit" and Ben and his Mum got his predt. He wen to Adams poty. When Adam opnd Bens present he said "Yepe" it was a magk reng. The End.

4. Copying a single text element or idea without copying the plot

This type of intertextuality is essentially a sub-set of the above. It is quite common and involves the writer using some aspect of topic, a title, a character and so on, as a stimulus for part or all of the writing. It is unclear whether writers recall previous texts after or during the writing process. However, data from students' self reporting of intertextual links seems to support the latter (Cairney, 1990). The essential difference from the above category is that the ties are far more obvious to the reader, and the writers are always aware of them.

Kylie provided an example of this category when writing a book of poems titled *A rocket in my pocket* (see Figure 5). This book of poetry was inspired by the Dr Seuss book of the same name."

I stopped and talked to her about the piece:

T.C: "What are you doing?"
Kylie: "I'm writing. I don't often write stories like this."
T.C: "Why not?"
Kylie: "I don't like it."
T.C: "Why don't you like writing stories like this?"
Kylie: "No, I don't like writing poems, I do like writing stories!"
T.C: "So, why did you write a poem today?"
Kylie: "Because my partner said I could write a poem - we're going to make a book".
T.C.: "Where did you get the idea from?"
Kylie: "Because we need a story about it."
T.C: "Who needs it?"
Kylie: "My partner and I. I used the first line then made up the rest."

Its interesting to note that Kylie used the title of the Dr Seuss book only. None of the content within her book reflected the writing of Seuss.

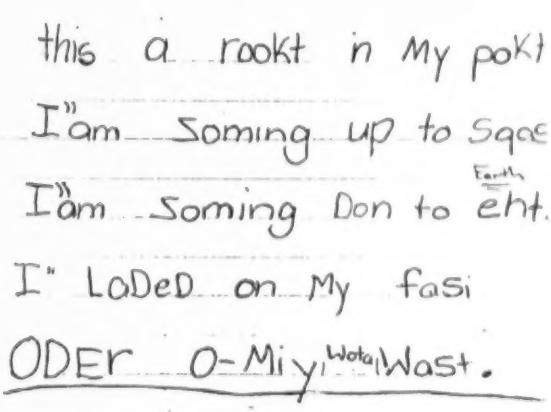
Within Inta's classroom other children wrote narratives which contained a single element of a book they had heard previously. For example, Sarah wrote a story about a poor foster child called Cinderella.

However, this piece has little relationship to the original in terms of plot, setting etc. To use Sarah's words:

"It's not the same. I just thought of the story but made mine different".

Similarly, Alice wrote a piece called *Fanny and her Friends*. This story used a favourite Blyton character, Fanny, and one of her settings (*The Enchanted Wood*), but used an original plot. In fact, other than these two 'borrowed' text features there were few other parallels with Blyton's work.

Figure 5: Kylie's poetry book titled "A rocket in my pocket"



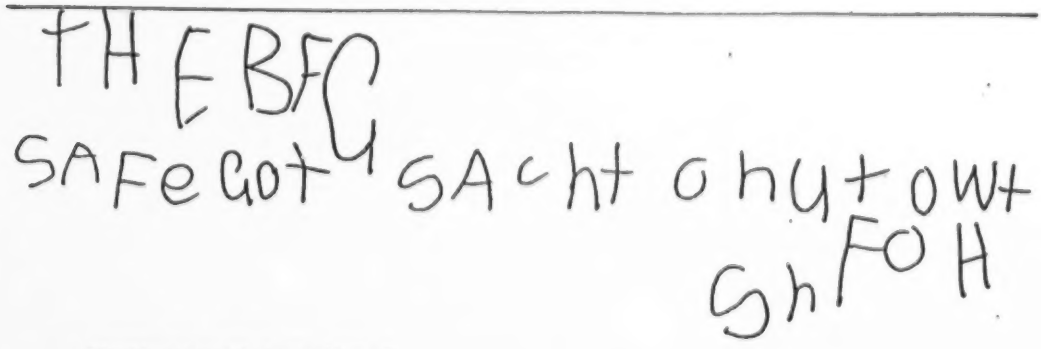
5. Detailed retellings of the story

Another common observation within this classroom was the tendency simply to retell the complete story. Students who did this followed the original plot precisely and presented a summary of the events that occurred. This type of intertextual response often led to the writing of exceptionally long texts over extended periods of time.

For example, some 2 months after writing her hospital piece which contained reference to the BFG, Briohny began another story which conformed much more closely to the original. In fact it was almost identical to the first chapter of BFG. Her minor diversions from the original involved using her name as the main character instead of Sophie, and adding a cat and a dog as characters "to keep her company when the BFG took her away".

Even Anthony one of the weakest students in the class (a virtual non-writer) struggled to complete a retelling called *The BFG* (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Anthony's writing about the BFG (a transcript of the text appears below Anthony's writing).



"Sophie got snatched out of her ..."

6. Creating a text from a number of separate narratives

A far more unusual instance of intertextuality involves students writing a narrative based on two or more stories they have read. The major links with past texts involve content parallels. For example, Lauren wrote a piece over a period of two weeks which concerned the adventures of 2 children who go down a tunnel they had discovered in the bush. The text begins with the accidental discovery of a tunnel. This is then explored and is found to be a maze of separate tunnels, all of which end at a doorway. Behind each doorway a variety of fantasy creatures/people are encountered.

This piece has obvious links with *Alice in Wonderland*, but also has elements that parallel Blyton's Faraway Tree books. For example, the discovery behind each door of new adventures is similar to the exciting encounters in different lands at the top of the Faraway Tree. As well, the characters behind these doors are typically pixies and witches, which is once again consistent with Blyton's stories.

Figure 7: Lauren's piece about two children who discover a tunnel

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25.8.87
"I am going shopping, don't leave the yard." So off went Mum. Whiel she was gone Sue said "Lets play ball". So they did. Tom thow the ball to Sue and Sue Misd it. It rolled on the grass and under a bush. Sue went and got the ball. Then she saw a narrow tunele going down under the bush. She said "Tome come here look". Sue said "Do you want to go down?"

26.8.87

"Yes" said Tom. So they went down. Tom went down first. At the end of the narrow tunnel there was a green door and S Sue opend the green door and in the green door there was a friendly wich and the wich said "Hello" and Tom and Sue said together, "H... H...Hello!" Then they ran away to another tunnel and the tunnel went more under the grand and they saw som big gold stiers. So they went up them and then there was a big door.

3.9.87

2. The Big Door

And then they opened it and in it there was a big big wizerd. The wizerd had a big pointy hat. He said "Why are you here". "We don't know" said Peter and Sue at the same time. "Come and meet my friends" said the wizerd. "OK" said Peter so off they went. They were all litle pixes. The pixes all had red hats, and all had blue pants and all had pink shirts and there were five of them.

10.9.87
"Then would you like to stay with us" said the wizard. "Yes please" said the childen together "Here are your clothes go and put them on in that room". So Sue and Tom went into the room and got dreest and then they came out and felt a little strae and thenTom wisped to Sue and said "Do you feel a little strage." "Yes" and then they said in aloud voice "Why do we fell strage." "Oh because we are maigic." "Are you maigic akeaks the chiled "Yes" said one of the five.

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7. Copying the plot but using different events, characters and setting

Another common link between texts occurred at the level of plot. Intertextual ties of this type involved the copying (usually consciously) of the plot of a story that had been read with new events, characters and normally a different setting. For example, Brock wrote a piece titled *The wishing chair* and proceeded to write a story identical in plot to Blyton's book of the same name. Like the original, the story is basically a tale which revolves around adventures with a chair that has magical qualities. In each story it is discovered inadvertently when a child ("children" in Blyton's story) sits on it while in a state of fear wishing he was somewhere else. The chair suddenly takes the child to their 'wished' destination and so begins a series of memorable adventures with the chair taking him to whatever place is desired.

Brock's story has only one central character and begins in a doctor's surgery with the main character wishing he was at home. Blyton's tale has two central characters who visit a shop that sells 'old things', become frightened and wish also that they were at home. In both cases the chair upon which they innocently sit suddenly takes them home signalling the beginning of a series of amazing adventures. The events that follow are quite different for each story. Unlike Blyton who continues for many pages and

numerous adventures, Brock loses interest the same day and doesn't return to the piece after writing about just two adventures.

Figure 8. An extract from Brock's piece 'The Wishing Chair' modelled on Blyton's story of the same title'

The Wishing Chair

Onec a pon a time ther was one boy his name was Tom. He lived in the cuntre in a little coteg wiht his motre. The next day he hat to have his eies chect so he wnte to ther doctr. He sat in the wating room. He sat in the wishing chair he wished that he was at home the chair tok him home. He was glad he was at home. He put the wishing chair in the playrome. His mothe kam out and sar "Gee Tom you wher cowik. What did he do to your eies". "Natingk!" he said. "Did he say for you to do annting" No! Then he went in for lunch. He had crem buns.

The Wishing Chair gos to the Lade of Giuints

Then he came out from luch. He whent to the wishing chair. He wish that he was at a giuts carsl. The chair took oof. The chair flow down into one of the giut carsls windows. Thar was a pixse the pixse said "Help me!" Tome said yes, I will said Tom. Come into the wishing chair. "Is thet a wishing chair". "Yes it is come on and get in ... "

The social dimension of intertextuality

The above discussion has focussed primarily upon the nature of the intertextual ties made between texts. However, another factor that became more and more obvious as I spent time in Inta's classroom was the social nature of the intertextual events that took place. That is, it became apparent that the links that were being made were not simply being made at a cognitive level. One criticism that could be levelled at earlier intertextual research (including the first stage of my project) is that typically it was concerned with the 'in-head' links that were made between texts. Little data have been presented which show a concern for the social nature of intertextuality.

(a) Enid Blyton's stories generate numerous look-a-likes

While all literacy events are in essence social (Cairney & Langbien, 1989), the complexity of these social processes was evidenced most vividly within this study in relation to the impact of Enid Blyton's books. Inta's reading of four Blyton books had a strong influence upon the writing of children in this classroom.

As Figure 9 shows ten 'Blyton type' stories were written in Inta's classroom during the year. I did not begin visiting Inta's room until June. However, a search of draft material stored by each writer revealed that the first major piece of writing was produced by Amanda (aged 5 years) from 22/3/87 to 29/3/87. This piece was titled *The Enchanted Wood* and was a retelling of the first two chapters of *The Magic Faraway Tree* (see Figure 10). It was typed by an aid and published for other readers within the class.

Figure 9. A summary of the writing observed which showed links with Blyton's books

February	Inta reads *Enchanted Wood*
March	Inta reads *The Magic Faraway tree* First story written by Amanda 22/3/87 to 29/3/87 - *The Enchanted Wood*
April	Inta reads *Folk of the Faraway tree*
May	Inta reads *The Wishing Chair*
June	Sally's story written (29/4/87 to 15/6/87) Chlorissa starts her story 25/6/87 Brock begins piece. Stops same day (25/6/87)
August	Nikki begins piece 4/8/87
	Alice begins 6/8/87
	Lauren begins piece 25/8/87
September	Kathleen begins piece 5/9/87
	Sarah begins piece 12/9/87
	12/9/87
	19/9/87
	26/9/87
October	Alice commences another piece 29/10/87 (unfin).
November	5/11/87
December	

One month later Sally wrote a story based on *The Magic Faraway Tree* 29/4/87-13/5/88 (see Figure 11). This appeared after the second Blyton book had been read. It was eventually published in June.

Figure 10. Amanda's story titled *The Enchanted Wood* the first 'Blyton type' story to be written in Inta's classroom (standardized spelling)

Once there was three children and their Mum and Dad. They lived in the cottage in a wood. One Day their Mum said they could have a free day because they would work hard the next day. They knew there was a wood behind their cottage. Then they had an idea they would go the wood and off they went. Then they couldn't find the Faraway Tree. Then they remembered something. If they whistled three times they would find the Faraway Tree. Soon one brown pixie came out of the woods and took them to the Faraway Tree and Silky brought some pop biscuits and we went up to moon faces and moon face said, "come up to the top of the tree it is 'supper land'. Bessie said "Let's go up and stay with moon face". So then Jo, Bessie and Fanny climbed up the tree.

While Amanda and Sally's stories were the first major pieces there had been a number of smaller pieces of writing that referred to *The Faraway Tree* books, including notes to Inta, notes to friends etc. This material is discussed in more detail later in the paper.

Figure 11. Sally's story titled *The Magic Faraway Tree* (standardized spelling)

The Magic Faraway Tree

There were three kids. There names was Nikki and Leanne and Adam. Nikki is the oldest. They went to live in a little cottage. It was very nice. They looked over the house and saw a forest. Then they went out of the door and went to the forest and saw a big tree and they went to climb the tree and climbed up and up very high and they found some friends. Their names was Moon-face and Silky. Moon-face had some pop biscuits and google and some toffee shocks. There was lots and lots. The end.

The next story to appear was Chlorissa's draft which she began on the 25/6/87 and was still writing at the end of the year (December). By this time the story was 20 pages long. On the same day that Chlorissa began her story, Brock began his piece based on the *Wishing Chair* (in the secret cave). However, this was left unfinished at the end of the day and Brock never returned to it.

On 4/8/87 Nikki was first observed writing a piece about some children who were lost in a magic wood. She was still writing this 15 page piece in December. This showed clear links with the *Enchanted Wood* and was largely a retelling. Within the text, she substituted her own name and the names of friends (Lauren, Sarah, Ben) for Blyton's characters.

Shortly after Nikki began her story Alice began a piece called *Fanny and her friends* (6/8/87). While this piece used one character - Fanny - and the setting of the Enchanted Wood, the story line is essentially her own. She finished her 6 page epoch one month later.

Lauren began her Faraway piece (discussed earlier in this paper) on the 25/8/87. It had only limited ties with the Faraway tree stories. It featured a series of mysterious doors each of which offered opportunities for adventures, and had an intrusion of pixies, witches etc. She finished this story 3 weeks later.

Kathleen began a story on 5/9/87 which essentially was a re-write of several adventures in different lands discovered at the top of the Faraway Tree. This piece was not completed until early December, and eventually was over 6 pages long.

Sarah started a piece which was primarily a retelling of "The Wishing Chair" on 12/9/87. The draft of this piece was lost two weeks later and Sarah abandoned the story.

On 29/10/87 Alice began a second story (shortly after finishing the first). She exclaimed as I watched her:

> "I'm writing another Faraway story and this one is going to have the whole class in it".

This piece was filed away that day and not touched again. This was the last major 'Blyton type' piece to begin, although Nikki and Chlorissa continued writing until the end of the year, and many other informal references to the Blyton books were made through letters, posters etc.

(b) The influence of the group upon Blyton Mania

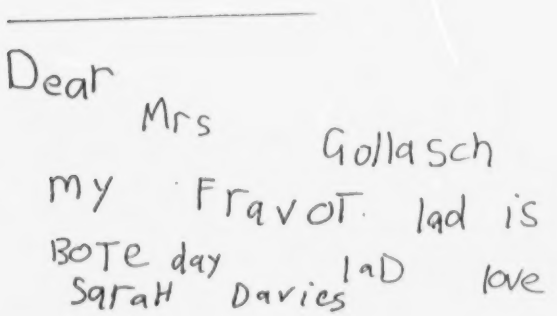
What emerges from a close analysis of the Blyton influence on writing in this classroom is that the rise of Blyton look-a-likes was a natural outgrowth of a specific group interest shared by members of the class. The writing of these pieces grew out of relationships with their teacher and fellow pupils. The Faraway Tree books and *The Wishing Chair* provided the opportunity for a significant group literary experience.

From the time Inta began reading the books there was complete class involvement. Everyone couldn't wait to find out what was going to happen next. Each day's reading was eagerly awaited. In between readings children would talk about the story, and reference was made to the book in numerous notes from children, which were a natural part of the class letter writing programme (see Figure 12).

The class was doing more than enjoying a story. Individual readers (listeners) began to project themselves into the book - to become insiders (as Nancie Atwell puts it). This was shown most clearly when several children began to write to other class members as if they were the characters. One child

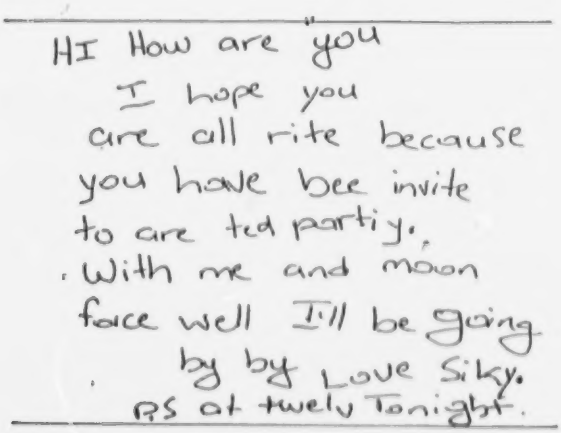
started off a series of notes that led to the children believing that there would be a rendezvous with Moon-face at midnight on a specific date (see Figure 13). Some children began calling each other on the telephone to make plans to meet each other.

Figure 12. A sample letter sent to Inta which referred to the Faraway Books



Worried parents finally phoned the teacher and Inta was forced to talk to the class and stress that they couldn't have a midnight rendezvous. The fantasy ended for all except one child. The children had been calling each other making plans to meet. One mother went along with her continued fantasizing about the rendezvous with Moon-face, because she thought it was just "good fun". She told her daughter that she would wake her at 12.00 am. She didn't of course. When the child woke herself at 3.00 am there were hysterical scenes because she had missed the rendezvous.

Figure 13. A letter from "Silky' to one of Inta's students


HI How are you
I hope you
are all rite because
you have bee invite
to are ted partiy.
With me and moon
face well I'll be going
by by Love Siky.
PS at twely Tonight.

When the reading of the first story *(Enchanted Wood)* was almost completed, the first major piece of writing appeared. The second came one month later. These two pieces were published and shared within the classroom. It is highly likely that this also had an impact upon the extent to which the Faraway books found their way into the children's writing. The sharing of these pieces in the classroom group helped to create a whole new network of social links based upon these books.

For a number of stories the writing began after exchanges with children who were already writing Blyton type stories. Chlorissa's piece was commenced after reading part of the stories written by Sally and

Amanda who were both close friends. Brock in turn started her piece the same day as Chlorissa. While sitting in the class secret cave pondering a suitable topic, she was visibly evesdropping while I was talking to Chlorissa about her piece.

A whole spate of stories began at this time, many of them featuring the names of friends. These friends had shared in the fun of talking about the books, playing Faraway tree fantasy games etc. Nikki used the names of Lauren, Sarah and Ben (all of these people wrote Faraway Tree stories at some stage) in her story. On the first day that I observed Nikki writing this piece, she sat with all of these children. Writing, chattering, joking etc. She commented when I asked her about these names:

> "Well, Lauren is my special friend, and Sarah she's my friend too, and Ben's my friend (sort of) he loves her (pointing to Lauren)"

Similarly Kathleen included the names of her friends and wrote much of her story with these students, reading sections out loud, asking for advice and so on.

(c) Blyton type stories help to build common ground

As more and more class members began to write stories that showed the influence of Blyton pieces the sharing of these literary experiences seemed to make an increasingly important contribution to group cohesiveness. Children who were writing Blyton type stories often did it near each other. For example, on the 15/10/87 I arrived to find Nikki and Chlorissa lying on the carpet writing with their exceptionally long drafts stretched out on the floor, each crossing over the other. The length of the drafts was important to them and they wanted to display the 'size' of their writing to the rest of the class. As well, these children shared and commented upon each other's work. On another day (22/10/87) I observed Lauren and Nikki engaged in conversation as they wrote:

Nikki (to Lauren nearby):	"I don't know how to end this, so I just keep on writing".
Lauren:	"Is that the one about the Faraway tree?"
Nikki:	"No". "Well, sort of".
Lauren:	"Well, why don't you have them going up to a magic land and getting stuck there."
Nikki:	"That's dumb and I've already done it".

(d) The influence of Inta's experiences of Blyton books upon the Class

Inta as teacher chose these books because she loved them. She indicated this to the class on a number of occasions. She had read the books as a young child and could recall that they had provided a significant literary experience for her. Because they were special for her she reads them each year to her class. During an interview with me one day she commented:

> "When I was young I loved these books. I remember how I was fascinated by the idea of pop biscuits. The whole thought of them popping and honey coming out in my mouth just blew my mind. The memory is so vivid of my thoughts about this part of the story. I shared this with the kids one day."

Inta loved Blyton's books and couldn't help but communicate it to her class. The books were part of her intertextual history and the sharing of her personal reading of the books had an impact upon the class. For example, the topic of 'pop biscuits' was frequently raised in letters to Inta from class members. As students attempted to build their relationship with Inta they drew upon part of their common literary ground.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research project which I have just described was to examine the influence of the 'cauldron of stories', which make up our intertextual histories. To determine if, and how, children draw upon the solutions of stories they carry around in their heads.

The study which I have described provides evidence to suggest that the writing of young children is influenced by texts that have been read to them. It appears that intertextual ties are often made consciously, but sometimes occur unconsciously. The nature of the intertextual ties has been shown to vary greatly. At times it is evidenced by the "stealing of an idea or two" (Cairney, 1990), but can involve the complex intertwining of several texts from one's past to create a new and 'original' text.

An interesting finding from this study is the failure to observe strong ability differences. As well, when one compares the findings of this study with the self reporting of much older grade 6 students (Cairney, 1990), there are remarkable parallels which suggest that significant age differences may not exist either. This needs to be investigated further.

Finally, while intertextuality has been shown to be individualistic, in fact some would say idiosyncratic, it is clear that it is not simply a cognitive process involving the utilization of background knowledge to produce a new text. Inta's classroom has provided evidence that to understand the nature of intertextuality one needs to examine literacy events within 'real' settings. The findings from this study suggest that intertextuality is a richly social phenomenon.

One major implication from this study is that the quality of literary experiences provided for children is important. The sharing of literature with students is much more than simply a pleasurable way to spend time. It is an important way in which classroom communities build common ground. The quality and quantity of interactions that are permitted in classrooms would seem to have a significant impact upon the building of the intertextual histories of our students. Teachers need to build literary environments where reading, writing and talking about reading and writing occur as natural extensions of the relationships that bind the members of classroom communities together.

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